

IAIA: TCU Ongoing Challenges During COVID-19 Pandemic 117th Congress – February 2021

Through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA), IAIA received urgently needed funding to move classes online to the extent possible and begin to address tremendous digital divide challenges. We were also able to provide emergency grants, equipment, and tuition assistance to our students to help them stay enrolled in classes. As we continue to support students during this difficult time and plan for onsite classes, our needs are growing. To address current pandemic-related challenges and plan for an uncertain future, TCUs need your ongoing support.

CARES and CRRSAA Funds at IAIA

- Transition students through COVID-19 emergency
- Transition to online classes
- Provide laptop and internet access to students
- Tuition discounts
- Ongoing student support
- PPE supplies/equipment
- Transition spring 2020 and fall 2020 Senior Shows



The CARES Act Funding was used in the spring 2020 semester to help students transition through the COVID-19 emergency. IAIA issued checks totaling \$171,325 directly to 265 undergraduate students. The college also refunded students \$280,000 for room and board costs and an additional \$13,380 in studio fees. Funds helped those students who remained on-campus by stocking the campus food pantry.

When the IAIA campus was closed at the beginning of the pandemic in March 2019, students were sent home, and the existing in-person classes were reworked into online classes. Faculty were trained in how to conduct online classes effectively. This included purchasing the necessary hardware and software for the faculty.

Many of our students live in areas of the country that have no or poor internet access. To support the students in completing their classes, laptops and internet access were purchased and given to any IAIA student who needed them. Laptops will continue to be purchased for students to continue with online classes as the pandemic drags on.

IAIA students who left the campus and returned home were given a 10% discount on their tuition. These discounts remain in place since most students are not able to participate on campus and must continue with many of their classes being online.

The CARES Act funding helped the college prepare new students for the fall 2020 semester by implementing online student support workshops and videos, including the admission process, an online Summer Bridge program, and the week-long, online orientation for students and their families to better help them understand the new platform. The college expanded online tutoring sessions for students and implemented a live chat on the web site to help answer any questions or concerns.

CARES Act funding was used to purchase PPE and cleaning supplies/equipment to keep IAIA classrooms, studios, and academic spaces safely open as needed for students to continue hands-on academic study and research.

The CARES Act funding also helped us transition to an online exhibit that allowed students' work to be shown and sold to support the continuation of their work and provide them an ongoing opportunity for financial self-sustainability. ([Spring 2020 Senior Show](#) and [Fall 2020 Senior Show](#))



Ongoing Challenges at IAIA

- Establish an on-campus health clinic to address holistic health issues
- Continue to build capacity to support learning remotely and in-person learning
- Construct indoor and outdoor classrooms
- Retrofit existing classrooms and other facilities to safely maintain social distancing
- Remove restrictions in authorized uses of emergency funds
- Extend grant period to permit funding of long-term projects.

If IAIA is to provide a safe, supportive learning environment promoting student success during this pandemic without substantially limiting student enrollments, it is imperative that we continue to expand remote learning, replace aging HVAC systems, enhance physical and behavioral health services, and construct indoor and outdoor learning areas. We also must expand and retrofit existing classrooms, our café, library, and other student gathering areas to maintain adequate social distancing. Additional funding will be required to support these initiatives, and since most of the projects cannot be completed within a short time period, it is essential that a longer grant period be permitted to expend the funds.

REQUEST: \$24 TCU IT Service Fund: USDA – Rural Utility Service

The ongoing pandemic has exacerbated the digital divide and homework gap and underscored the lack of broadband access across Indian Country. To address these deficiencies, Congress should establish a *permanent TCU IT Service Fund* within the existing (and previously under-used) **USDA-Rural Utilities Service Program**. An annual \$24 million set-aside for TCUs, which are the 1994 Land-grant institutions, is needed to cover ongoing equipment costs, maintenance and upkeep, infrastructure expansion, and IT staffing. If TCUs had adequate funding for IT service and infrastructure support, they would have already put in place many of the community-based mobile hot spots needed to address the “homework gap” on many reservations.



INSTITUTE OF AMERICAN INDIAN ARTS: Broadband and IT Challenges

Software and Hardware

The pandemic has brought to the forefront many of the significant challenges that our students face as distance learners. Many students do not own computers and cannot afford to purchase one. Normally, these students could use lab computers available to them on campus. A program that provides a computer to each student upon enrollment at IAIA would remove this obstacle. Along with that computer is the need to access specially licensed software. Licensing costs for software can be quite expensive for small colleges like IAIA.

Extending and improving the wireless network to outside learning spaces will be essential once students resume on-campus classes. This will ensure maximum flexibility and use of space to accomplish physical distancing.

- Robust laptop computers that students may keep
- Multi-year subscription to software for student use
- Extending the network via broad outdoor Wi-Fi access
- Virtual Desktop infrastructure so students may have access to high-end computing systems

Staffing

The majority of IAIA students are attending classes remotely, and many faculty and staff are working remotely. We have found that supporting these groups at remote locations is very time-intensive. Our IT techs spend more time per support ticket assisting students, faculty, and staff in a virtual environment rather than face-to-face. To continue providing efficient support, the information technology department will need to add an IT technician position to collaborate with support specialists to analyze and diagnose computer issues while assisting students, faculty, and staff remotely.

- One IT technician



REQUEST: \$500 million TCU Construction Fund: DOI – Bureau of Indian Education

A recent AIHEC survey of TCUs revealed a list of chronic facilities-related maintenance and rehabilitation needs, including student and faculty housing, classrooms, libraries, and laboratories. The TCUs have an estimated total need of \$489.75 million in deferred maintenance and rehabilitation and need \$837 million to fully implement existing master plans. A dedicated TCU deferred construction and maintenance/rehabilitation fund through the DOI-BIE would help meet the 21st century needs of *all* TCUs, including technology-enabled facilities; campus renovations; IT infrastructure; and facilities necessary for career, technical, and pipeline programs.

IAIA: Facilities Needs -- Construction, Maintenance, Rehabilitation

The pandemic has brought to the forefront IAIA's need to upgrade and add to the current HVAC systems in some of the campus's largest buildings. Additionally, improving outdoor dining spaces must be a priority, not only for the reality that we currently find ourselves in, but also for our students' overall health and mental well-being as we go forward. Finally, both indoor and outdoor learning spaces need to be reimagined. This includes the reconfiguration of areas, the purchase of additional furnishings, and adding on-campus storage to allow for more room in the studios and classrooms.

- Significantly improve the college's outdoor dining areas with permanent awnings, furniture, and heating
- Upgrade and possibly replace HVAC systems that currently serve the student residence center
- Augment current HVAC infrastructure in the studios with enhanced exhaust ventilation systems
- Purchase additional furniture to allow for expanded indoor learning areas
- Create outdoor classroom areas to promote open air instruction
- Construct a storage facility on the campus to create more space in studios and classrooms